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The Griot

The Africana Studies Department Newsletter

STAFF

Editors:

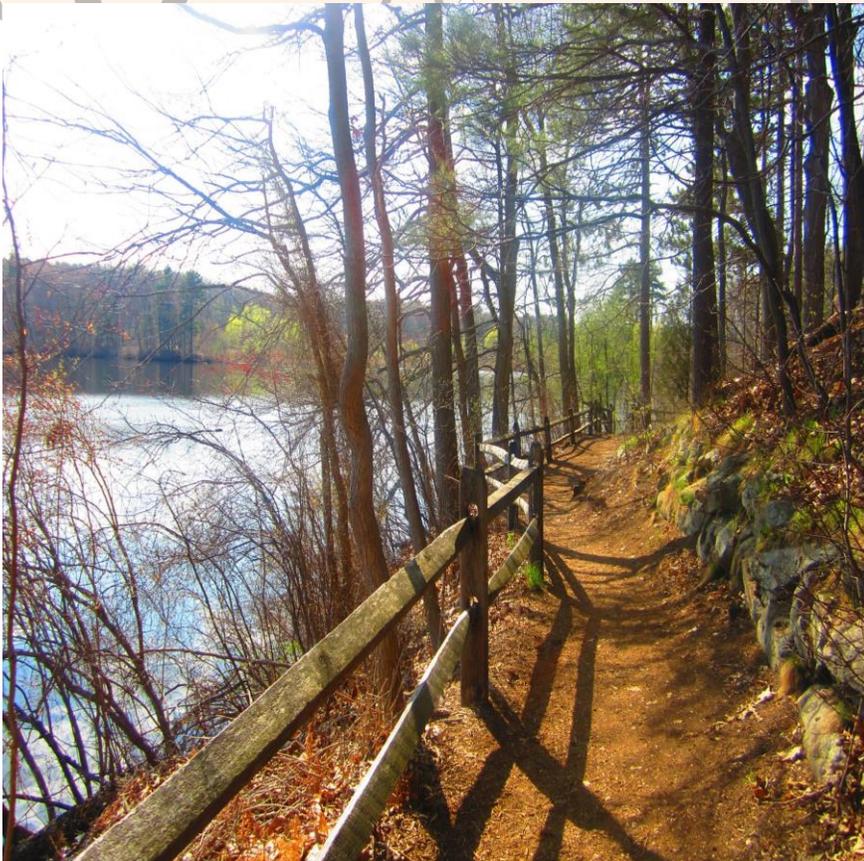
Crystal Adu-Poku '16
Pelumi Botti '16

Contributors:

Jamila Miller '18
Zilpa Oduor '18
Allison Steiz '16

Advisors:

Susan Lange
Judith Rollins, Professor Emerita
Lizette Rodriguez-Ponce



Featured Articles

This edition of *The Griot* includes articles on the Department's Swahili Wintersession in Tanzania, on students' attending the Huntington Theater's production of "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," and on their visiting the W.E.B. Du Bois Library at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Also, Professor Maparyan discusses her course on "Womanism" and Professor Obeng describes his 2014-15 sabbatical activities. We hope you'll enjoy this issue of the Africana Studies Department's *Griot*.

Welcome

Filomina C. Steady, Chair

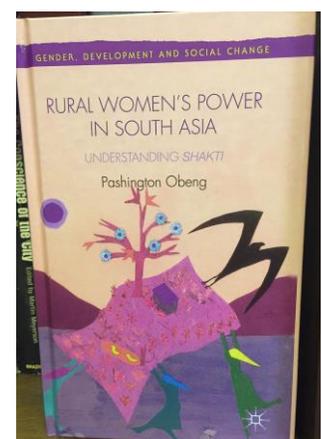
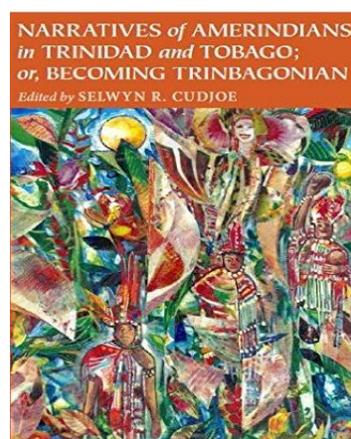
Africana Studies has had two productive and successful years. It held a curriculum retreat in 2015, during which it developed an innovative and dynamic curriculum based partly on the recommendations of the Spring 2014 Visiting Committee.

Our courses continue to attract diverse students. Statistics from the Registrar's Office show that, over the years, the largest group of students who *take our courses* is White at 41%, while Blacks or African-Americans make up 16%; Asians, 13%; and International Students, 11%. On the other hand, the majority of our *majors* are Black or African-American (15%), while International Students make up 18%; Hispanics, 10% and Whites, 9%. And the majority of our *minors* are also Black or African-American (55%), while Whites make up 21% and International students, 7%.

Our current faculty members are advancing the tradition of having a wide international and national reach both in terms of our contribution to scholarship and involvement in national and international affairs. All of our faculty members are actively engaged in research, and regularly attend and present papers at professional conferences. Our professional contributions make us a small but formidable group of scholars, as is evident in our research and a number of award-winning publications

We look forward to a productive year ahead, in terms of teaching, research and contributions to the College community. We especially welcome and look forward to working with the new in-coming president, Dr. Paula Johnson, the first African-American president at Wellesley.

New Books from Africana Studies Faculty



Department Events

**DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES
IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION:
A CASE OF SWAHILI**
WITH PROFESSOR GEOFRED OSORO



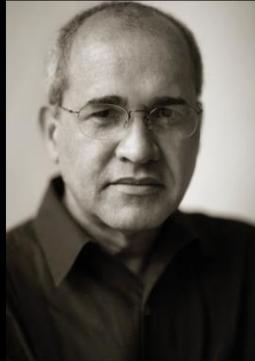
Africana
Studies
Department
Colloquium

Wednesday
November 12
4:15pm

Founders
Room 120

RSVP TO SLANGE2

The Africana Studies Department, Harambee House, English Department, Freedom Project, Edwards Funds, American Studies Department, History Department, New House Center, Women's and Gender Studies Department, and Sociology Department:



**Black Lives (Matter) and
American Literature**

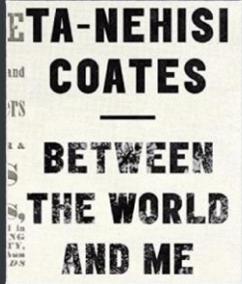
ARNOLD RAMPERSAD, Sara Hart Kimball Professor Emeritus in the Humanities, Stanford University

Tuesday April 5th 4:30 p.m.
Margaret Clapp Library Lecture Room

Arnold Rampersad is a recipient of the prestigious MacArthur "genius grant" Fellowship. The first volume of *Life of Langston Hughes* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. His *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* was a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award. He has held teaching appointments at the University of Virginia, Rutgers University, Harvard University, Columbia University, Princeton University and Stanford University.

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781-283-2434

Reading Ta-Nehisi Coates' Between the World and Me



Join the Africana Studies for a fireside discussion on Atlantic correspondent Ta-Nehisi Coates' iconic memoir on race and America, *Between the World and Me*

Chaired by Dr. Tracey Cameron, Assistant Dean of Intercultural Education, Director of Harambee House and Advisor for Students of African Descent

Harambee House, Tuesday, November 3, 2015
4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Questions: arodrig9@wellesley.edu Disability Services: disabilityservices@wellesley.edu Expiry: 11/4

#1 New York Times Bestseller

Africana Studies Colloquium Fall 2015



The Black Church: The Crucible of Hope, Hurt and Healing

Professor Pashington Obeng

Thursday, November 12 2015
Founders 120
4:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.



WELLESLEY COLLEGE

Africana Studies Department presents

Slavery, Compensation, Reparations: A Conference

Saturday, October 25, 2014
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Collins Cinema

Featured Speakers:
SIR HILARY BECKLES, Principal and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of the West Indies (Barbados)
NICHOLAS DRAPER, University College London
ERIC GRAHAM, University of Edinburgh
WILLIAM PETTIGREW, University of Kent
KWADWO OSEI-NYAME JNR, University of London
CRAIG MURPHY, Wellesley College
LOUIS LEE SING, Former Mayor of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
JOHN TORPEY, City University of New York

Africana Studies Spring 2015 Colloquium



"Womanist is to Feminist as Purple is to Lavender"
-Alice Walker

April 28th
4:15 p.m.
Harambee House

Dr. Layli Maparyan
"The Womanist Idea"




AFR 310: Reading Du Bois - Trip to Amherst

In the fall of 2016, Professor Selwyn Cudjoe took his class, "Reading Du Bois," to visit the Du Bois Papers at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The visit was hosted by Professor John Bracey. The following are two students' reactions to the visit.

Allison Steiz '16

Going to visit the W.E.B. Du Bois Library at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, seeing his archived works and listening to Professor John Bracey talk about his tremendous role in advancing African/African-American education and the intellectual work of African-American women was really inspiring and definitely enhanced my understanding of who he really was.

It was especially extraordinary to see the correspondence between Dr. Du Bois and the grandfather of a student in our class. Seeing these historical letters put his work and influence into context for me. Moreover, hearing Professor Bracey describe his daily life personalized him and his legacy and gave me a more nuanced understanding of his life. I learned that he would wake up, work until lunch, break for lunch, work until dinner, break for dinner, enjoy one cigarette and some shandy at the end of the night and then repeat the process the daily. He was clearly very organized and disciplined with his time and work.



Prof. Cudjoe (third from right) with class at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library. Host, Professor John Bracey of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is second from right

I also enjoyed Professor Bracey's story of Dr. Du Bois sitting beside his lady friend who wanted to share some ice cream while travelling in a Jim Crow section of a train. When the woman asked the waiter for an extra spoon, the waiter brought back magnificent silver china and cutlery, insisting that Dr. Du Bois would dine on only the finest china they had. It goes to show how revered he was among the black public at that time.

In many cases, black women contributed to Dr. Du Bois' work. I did not know that Shirley Graham Du Bois helped write *The Star of Ethiopia*, nor did I know that an African American female sociologist contributed to the last chapter of *Philadelphia Negro* that examines domestic service work among black women in the Seventh Ward. I find it very respectful of Du Bois to have asked a black woman to contribute to this part of his study, knowing that he would not have the same access to black women's voices as a black woman herself would.

Last, but not least, learning that the W.E.B. Du Bois Library was a result of over ten years of student activism was really inspiring. It likely took a great deal of time and effort for the student activists to collect the 10,000 signatures needed to get the library dedicated to Dr. Du Bois. Contrary to those who thought renaming the library would decrease donations, the W.E.B. Du Bois Library has received more donations and requests from other scholars and artists to publish their work there. It's great that the library has digitized his work on Credo so that people all around the world can access it. It is to some degree unfortunate that this library is located in Amherst - a rather isolated town of Massachusetts. I think it might receive more visitors if it were in a city. Nevertheless, it is wonderful that the library exists and is a product of student activism. I learned a great deal from visiting and I am really thankful to have had the opportunity to do so.

AFR 310: Reading Du Bois - Trip to Amherst (Cont'd)

Jamila Miller '17

Most writers don't start publishing articles in major papers until their 20s. W. E. B. Du Bois was writing and publishing when he was 15 years old. He went on to create so many works that they culminated into an immense collection. One cannot visualize how much he produced without seeing this exhibit.

The Du Bois visit has changed the way I view my studies. Until now, I have made decisions in picking my classes related to my major. Now I think I need to widen my scope of study. Du Bois showed how many subjects are intertwined and I realize limiting my scope is limiting my thought processes. A political issue could have an economic and social aspect that would not be known without a multifaceted approach. Du Bois is a true intellectual.

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Pelumi Botti '16

On October 5, 2014, Professor Selwyn Cudjoe arranged for both of his Fall classes (AFR 201 The African American Literary Tradition and AFR 302 Caribbean Intellectual Thought in the Twentieth Century) to attend the Huntington Theatre production of the 1967 iconic film, *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner*. I immediately recognized the film as one of my mother's favorites. My mother would tell me about the deeply moving script about an American interracial couple who go to share the news of their relationship with their parents for the first time. Set at the cusp of the Civil Rights Movement, the couple is met with many challenges. I also heard about the great poise and eloquence of the leading actor, Sidney Poitier. With all this information I had learned about the film, I was filled with anticipation and excitement before seeing the play. I could not help but wonder how this play would successfully tackle the issues of race brought up by the film in a manner that would be equally as applicable to our contemporary world. Furthermore, how would this production apply to my generation, a generation born after the Civil Rights Movement? In fact, the play was astounding. Putting on the production in 2014 allowed for a greater freedom to explore issues that could not be fully discussed in the film. For example, characters were more fully fleshed out. As I laughed at the humorous lines, I could not help but be saddened that the issue of racism is still deeply relevant and engrained in today's world. Despite all the progress made since my mother's childhood, when the film was first made, much work still needs to be done.

After the play we were invited for a talkback with the cast of the production which included Malcolm-Jamal Warner, who played Theo Huxtable in one of my favorite television series, *The Cosby Show*. We were able to discuss many of the issues brought up by the play and how these issues applied to our generation. Our journey back to Wellesley was a very lively one, full of debate and discussion about the play and the history of race in America.

We were all grateful to Professor Cudjoe, Susan Lange and the Africana Studies Department for organizing this wonderful opportunity.

Wintersession in Tanzania, East Africa

Safari

Zilpa Odour '18

In January 2015, for the first time, eighteen Wellesley students along with three faculty and staff traveled to Tanzania as an extension to the Swahili program. The purpose of the trip was to expose the students to different aspects of East African culture and give them an opportunity to be immersed in a place that spoke Swahili. Our host was MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (TCDC), an institute located in Arusha, a city in northern Tanzania. The Centre provided two *walimu* (teachers) that helped teach the Swahili classes and lead excursions around the country.

The itinerary was filled with many activities that highlighted different aspects of East African life. The activities included trips to the market where students bargained for fruits, vegetables, fabrics and other goods; a visit to Ngorongoro crater and Olduvai Gorge for a tour of the most important paleoanthropological site in the world; the stop over at the East African Community headquarters for an opportunity to learn about African politics and policy; a visit to one of the starting gates to Mt. Kilimanjaro; a ten hour bus ride to Dar es Saalam in public transportation; a visit to the island of Zanzibar; snorkeling in the Indian Ocean and many other amazing adventures.

This *safari* (trip) was phenomenal. We are grateful to Professor Geofred Osoro, the main organizer of this Wintersession. And we are thankful for all the people that we met, the stories they shared, and the kindness they showed us throughout our stay there. We learned a great deal about Tanzania and its diverse population, gained skills (such as bargaining and cooking new dishes), made some amazing friends and improved upon our Swahili. It was a very humbling experience and many of us hope to go back someday, reconnect with some of the friends we made, and look at the developments since our time there.



Outside of the East African Community
Headquarters



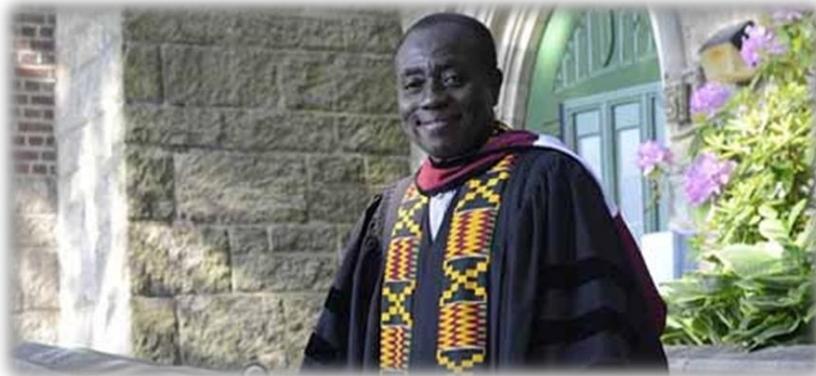
In front of the Machame gate leading to Mt.
Kilimanjaro

Teaching Womanism at Wellesley College

Layli Maparyan, Ph.D., Katherine Stone Kaufmann '67 Executive Director of the Wellesley Centers for Women and Professor of Africana Studies

In the fall of 2014, I had the pleasure and privilege of teaching Wellesley College students for the first time since my arrival in 2012. The course was “Womanism,” an overview of the social change perspective pioneered by women of African descent. During the first half of the semester, we worked on understanding the roots of womanism as both cosmological and cultural, insofar as every culture has its own historically derived worldview and understandings about human affairs, planet earth, and the spiritual or invisible dimension. Our core text was Sylvia Ardyn Boone’s *Radiance from the Waters: Ideals of Feminine Beauty in Mende Art*. Much more than the title suggests, this book describes and analyzes the world of women and how that world is transmitted to girls, who are understood to be the ones who will hold communities together when they grow up. During the second half of the semester, we explored womanist activism in several arenas: social, political, environmental, and spiritual. Several films helped us see womanist activism in action, as well as numerous case studies presented in my own interdisciplinary publications, *The Womanist Reader* and *The Womanist Idea*. By the end of the course, students were learning to map womanist social change interventions from start to finish, in hopes that they would carry this perspective forward into their future careers. All told, I met some wonderful Wellesley women (and two cool ones from Olin) who made my first experience teaching at Wellesley memorable and inspiring!

Faculty Spotlight: Professor Pashington Obeng



During my sabbatical in 2014-15, I was able to finish my book, *Rural Women’s Power in South Asia: Understanding Shakti*, which was published in July 2014. In addition, I had the opportunity to travel with other scholars to Israel and the West Bank. That trip was eye-opening because it helped me to appreciate the multi-layered issues that undergird the Israeli-Arab relations. After that trip, I was in South Africa where I

gave lectures on Africans in India and Race Relations. From South Africa, I went to Ghana to begin new research on Ghanaian Jews and Hindus. This new area of inquiry is fascinating because I’m focusing on phenomena that have often been understudied in continental Africa. Before the 2015 spring semester, I had the privilege to travel to Tanzania with Swahili students, Professor Osoro of Africana Studies and Karen Pabon, Director of the Slater International and Adviser to International students. I still have vivid memories of the people we met and all the sites we visited. Although I had not taken Swahili before the trip, our teachers inspired us to learn the language with fun and seriousness.

Africana Studies Prize Winners 2015-16



Fannie Lou Hammer



Ella Smith Elbert '88



Zora Neale Hurston

Fannie Lou Hammer Prize for First and Second Year Students

2015 Winner

Alexis Corcoran '18

“HIV/AIDS in Black America: The Effects of Compounding Risks on HIV/AIDS Infection in Black America with Attention to Gender Roles”

2016 Winner

Serenity Hughes '18

“The Mis-education of Serenity Hughes: A Journey to Self-Realization”

Ella Smith Elbert '88 Prize for Juniors

2015 Winner

Bernice Chan '16

“The Diversity of Chinese Immigration Experience Within a Family: Huan Yin Chan and Yeema Wu”

Zora Neale Hurston Prize for Seniors

2015 Winner

Fiona Almeida '15

“Captured from Their Homeland and Forced into Slavery”

2016 Winners

Pelumi Botti '16

“Should Africa be Paid Reparations for the Atlantic Slave Trade and, if so, Why?”

Cindy Coffee '16

“African Presence at Welleslev College”